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AUTHOR Davidson, Betty M.; Taylor, Dianne L.
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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the effects of principal succession in a school-reform process. The report focuses on multiple changes in the principal's position at a primary school participating in the accelerated schools project. The text opens with an overview of the accelerated schools project followed by a description of the study's methodology. Data were collected at a rural elementary school comprised of 440 low-socioeconomic status youngsters in grades pre-kindergarten through second. Case-study methods were used to collect qualitative data through semistructured interviews. Interviewees included the three principals appointed to the school after the accelerated schools process began. A detailed analysis of each principal's time in office is presented. The results show that restructuring processes can withstand changes in principalship under certain circumstances and that changing principals is not in itself damaging to the restructuring process. Rather, the orientation of the new principal and his or her fit with the organization and its members are salient. New principals who do not know and/or do not support the process create obstacles that undermine progress, all of which emphasizes the importance of fundamental systemic change. (RJM)

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THE EFFECTS OF PRINCIPAL SUCCESSION IN AN ACCELERATED SCHOOL

Betty M. Davidson
University of New Orleans

and

Dianne L. Taylor
Louisiana State University

CONTACT:
Dr. Betty Davidson
Department of Educational Leadership,
Foundations, and Counseling
College of Education
University of New Orleans
New Orleans, LA 70148

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Well documented in the literature is the difficulty of bringing about change in schools (see Prestine & Bowen, 1993; Taylor & Bogotch, 1994; Wehlage, Smith, Lipman, 1992; Weiss & Cambone, 1994). Change, however, is not impossible. Key to success, according to Leithwood, et al. (1992) and others (Barth, 1990; Murphy, 1991), is the principal. Such principals are often described as the "keepers of the vision" (Brouillette, 1997), because they work both to create a sense of community around an agreed upon vision of what the school is striving to become and to sustain an over-arching commitment to that vision. There are, however, naturally occurring events that accrue from the dynamic and complex character of schools and districts that undermine both a sense of community and feelings of commitment. One of the most common of these events is personnel changes. In the present paper, we examine the effects of a particularly disruptive personnel change, changing principals, on a school reform process.

Personnel changes involving the principal, often referred to as principal succession, occur for a number of reasons. Among the most common are promotion to a central office position and a district philosophy that schools do best when principal changes are frequent. In addition, there is widely held belief that bringing a new administrator to an organization experiencing performance difficulties will solve the problems. Ogawa (1995), however, points out that the research provides little support for this belief, and cites several studies in which administrator succession had deleterious effects on organizational performance. On the other hand, other studies are cited which indicate that administrator changes produce positive results. Ogawa concludes that the difference may lie in the "fit" between the administrator and the organizational members, noting that "when successors fail to adhere to

organizational norms, conflict and tension arise" (p. 368). Conversely, Ogawa observes, "when successors behave in ways that reveal their concern and expertise, subordinates respond favorably" (p. 368). Ogawa's conclusions regarding fit are supported in the current study, as will be seen shortly.

The present study examined the effect that principal succession has on a school reform process. In particular, we investigate multiple changes in principal at a primary school participating in the Accelerated Schools Project. To understand the context in which principal succession was studied here, a brief overview of the Accelerated Schools Project is provided.

Components of the Accelerated Schools Project

The Accelerated Schools Project is a comprehensive process for restructuring schools serving low-income, at-risk children. Driving the process is a philosophy which posits that if the school is not sufficiently good for the children of the professional staff, it is not sufficiently good for any child. Thus, the challenge to teachers and principals participating as an accelerated school is to create a school to which they would send their own children (Brunner & Hopfenberg, 1992). The ultimate goal is to prepare all students for the educational mainstream by providing enriched educational experiences, not unlike those experiences currently reserved for children placed in programs for the gifted (Levin, 1996).

To accomplish this end, the school staff are guided by a set of principles that grow out of the philosophy. These principles include unity of purpose, empowerment with responsibility, and building on strengths. As part of the accelerated schools process, the faculty "takes stock" of strengths and challenges. Based on these strengths and challenges,

cadres are formed comprised of teachers, school administrators, staff, parents, and students to study the most compelling problems and recommend a course of action to the school as a whole.

Method

The present study examines the effect of principal succession on a school reform process. Data were collected at a rural elementary school in a mid-south state that had participated in the Accelerated Schools Project for six years. The school population is comprised of 440 low-SES youngsters in grades pre-kindergarten though second. The student population is mixed ethnically, with 68% of the students designated as black, 30% white, and 2% Hispanic; 75% participate in the free-or-reduced price lunch program. In 1991, the school, referred to by the pseudonym Langford Primary, initiated implementation of the accelerated schools process. Between 1991 and 1997, the district appointed a series of four principals to lead the school. As can be seen in Table 1, the greatest longevity of any of these principals was three years.

Case study methods (Yin, 1989) were used to collect qualitative data through semi-structured interviews. Interviewees included the three principals appointed to the school after the accelerated schools process began. The principal who led the school in 1991-1992, and who was instrumental in bringing the accelerated schools process to Langford, was not interviewed because he was not affected by the change of principals. In addition, interviews took place with teachers who had been at the school continuously for at least seven years, including the six years the school participated in the Accelerated Schools Project. Thus, teacher informants had knowledge both of the school prior to initiation of the accelerated

schools process and of the effects the multiple changes in principals had on the reform process. This purposeful sampling strategy resulted in 15 informants, 12 of whom were teachers.

An interview protocol of 10 items, taking 30 to 60 minutes to administer, explored teachers' perceptions of 1) the characteristics of the school prior to initiation of the accelerated schools process, and 2) the effects of each principal's leadership style on the change process. In particular, we were interested in teachers' job responsibilities. The accelerated schools process empowers teachers by involving them on cadres, as noted above, and thus functions most effectively when the principal uses a participatory leadership style. If a principal whose leadership style was bureaucratic in nature were appointed to the school, the activities of these cadres could be curtailed, resulting in a return to traditional models for managing schools and in less empowerment for teachers.

Interviews with principals were guided by a protocol of five items developed to investigate principals' perceptions about coming to a school already involved in a reform process. Principals were asked if they had any training in the accelerated schools process either before or subsequent to their appointment to Langford. In addition, principals were asked what they found to be particularly easy and particularly difficult about taking over the principalship at Langford. A content analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was used to construct a chronology of the change process during the 1992-97 school years.

Findings

Setting and Background

Langford Primary School is located in a progressive public school district comprised of affluent communities and areas of extreme poverty. Teachers from neighboring school systems are attracted to district because of comparatively high salaries; principals are appointed from within the district. For principals, being transferred to another school is a sign of success; thus, several of the principals appointed to Langford viewed the move positively as a vote of confidence from the district superintendent and personnel director.

The teaching staff at Langford includes not only 25 classroom teachers but also 14 support staff, such as art and music teachers, guidance counselor, Reading Recovery teachers, and several teacher assistants. As noted above, the 440 students come from low-SES families, 67% are considered at-risk.

The years preceding Langford's implementation of the accelerated schools process were ones of change and turmoil. Langford had long been a neighborhood school for a predominantly white, rural community, and housed grades kindergarten through six. In 1989, however, attendance boundaries were reorganized, some schools were closed, and others changed grade level configurations. Langford was dramatically affected by these changes. Not only did Langford become a primary school comprised of grades pre-kindergarten through two, but it was forced to absorb faculty and students from two schools that were closing. Making matters worse, there were deep rifts among the three communities now being served by the school. What was once a homogeneous neighborhood school, was changed to a diverse racial, ethnic, and social class mix. Tension and conflict

grew within the faculty leading to fragmentation and isolation of the professional staff. Similar rivalries were evident among students. Merging three separate communities into a single school culture proved a difficult struggle.

The physical plant provided little help in overcoming the divisions. Divided into separate wings, the school is configured like a giant E. The cafetorium, library, and administrative offices are in separate buildings that form the back of the E and connect to each other and the wings by a walkway. Three wings form the arms of the E and house different grade levels, with pre-kindergarten and kindergarten together in one building, first grade in the middle building, and second grade in the third building.

One of the obstacles to developing a sense of cohesion among the faculty was the traditional management style of the principals. When asked what the school was like before the accelerated schools process was implemented, each of the teachers interviewed agreed that the school was "very traditional" and that teachers "didn't make decisions." Frustration mounted as teachers tried to cope with a studentbody that was very different in terms of student age range, ethnicity, and socio-economics. Little help was forthcoming from the principal, leading one teacher to reflect, "We had no involvement at all in any decisions in how to deal with these children because of the principal we had. Everything was top down."

Another agreed, noting more pointedly,

> The principal was dictatorial. Teachers stayed in their classrooms and didn't really communicate with each other. There was not a lot of sharing going on. Each class seemed real isolated within itself.

Another teacher compared the school prior to becoming an accelerated school with the changes that were brought about by the accelerated schools process. She said,

> Prior to accelerated schools you were given guidelines and stipulations to follow with the curriculum. You specifically had to keep management systems to a tee, exactly how it was stated.

In the midst of teachers' struggles, a new principal, Lincoln Russell, was appointed to Langford. As will be detailed below, Mr. Russell was instrumental in bringing the accelerated schools process to Langford. However, his tenure at the school was short-lived, as his success at Langford paved the way for his promotion to a newly created central office position for school restructuring. The effects of the change in principals that brought Russell to the school and the series of principal who followed him are described by Langford teachers below.

Effects of Principal Succession

Lincoln Russell. Lincoln Russell arrived at Langford when the faculty was near a nadir. Concomitantly, Russell arrived with ideas that could help turn the school around. He was serving on a district task force working to develop a restructuring plan for the entire school system. He brought with him an enthusiasm for the accelerated schools process and an commitment to test its merits in relationship to the district's developing restructuring plan. As noted, the school district prided itself as progressive and over the years had built a culture of continuous improvement that permeated the schools (Taylor, Bogotch, & Kirby, 1994). Consequently, Langford teachers were both used to school improvement efforts and

eager to find a way to change the school environment when Russell assumed the principalship.

In the summer of 1991, a team, including Russell, the school's assistant principal, and a group of teachers, was trained in the accelerated schools process. This core group, in turn, trained the rest of the faculty. During the first year, the faculty built the capacity to change, putting great effort into creating a unity of purpose and overcoming old schisms. As might be guessed, the task was not an easy one. Teachers recalled the following difficulties and triumphs,

> We had a lot of meetings. It was a rough year because we had a lot to accomplish ... getting everything set up, but by the end of that year, it was all worth it.

and

> We went through our growing pains, finding our strengths and weaknesses, and really learning the work of inquiry.

and

> It was difficult, at times, with everything to learn. But it was something that everyone wanted to do. There were positive attitudes that it [the process] would make a change for the children, and for us as members of the faculty.

At the conclusion of that school year, the faculty and staff had completed the taking stock process, developed their vision, set priorities, established cadres and the governance structure, and began utilizing the inquiry process to develop solutions to the challenge areas.

Before the 1992-93 school year started, Russell moved to central office to oversee the district restructuring effort, including the fledgling process at Langford.

Roberta Fredrick. Given the turmoil at Langford in the years prior to Russell becoming principal, one would expect any new program to flounder with his departure; however, all 12 teachers interviewed described a smooth transition to the new principal, Roberta Fredrick. In fact, 10 of the teachers agreed that it was under her leadership that the school improvement process really took hold. They felt this occurred because Fredrick knew something about the accelerated schools process and strongly supported it. Moreover, with Russell in a central office position created to promote school reform, district support was also strong.

Reflecting on the transition, one teacher recalled that,

> To a degree, we knew more than the principal did when it came to accelerated schools. It was hard because the person that trained with us, was gone. We had someone new, and we were her leader, in a sense, when it came to accelerated schools. But she was really open and wanted to learn, and that helped out a lot.

The faculty quickly recognized that the leadership style of Fredrick was compatible with the accelerated schools process. One teacher described the leadership style of the principal in this way,

> She came in and was just open to anything. Just whatever you wanted to try. If you could prove that it would work and did what you had to, she was behind you 100%. Be creative, do what you have to do. I liked it.

Another teacher felt Fredrick "encouraged us to participate" by giving the teachers "a free hand if we wished to try things -- she allowed us to do it. She believed that we should be risk takers." As another teacher noted, "She learned the process that year and I think we did really well with her."

As Fredrick emersed herself in a school implementing the accelerated schools process, she recalled that the three biggest challenges she faced were: 1) understanding the process, 2) the personalities of the faculty and, 3) the faculty's expectations for the students. Addressing the first challenge, Fredrick attended a 1992 summer training and a subsequent training on using the Inquiry Process held the following November. In her words, "It [the training] was useful so that I could get a handle on what had happened up to the point where I became the administrator."

The personalities of the faculty posed the second challenge for Fredrick. The teachers felt they had worked hard the previous year implementing the process, were proud of their accomplishments, and were eager to move forward. Fredrick stated that even though there were "a lot of strong personalities" among the faculty and "they were very opinionated, I think I came in at a good point. They had finished the assessment part." She continued by saying that, "when I came in, it was great because then I could set up the structures for the problem solving and decision making. They had not established their routines of practices. So it was good."

Fredrick explained the third challenge -- student expectations -- as "a big challenge because these students came from a low socio-economic background." She went on to relate that,

> The lack of background experiences and the fact that they were minorities resulted in low expectations on the part of the faculty, parents, and students that they could achieve it high levels. And so getting over that and changing teachers' belief systems -- it was very difficult, impossible for some people. That was a really big obstacle for me.

The easiest part of becoming an administrator in a school involved in a restructuring process according to Fredrick was "the whole instructional part of it because I think that that is my strength." She had spent 11 years as a classroom teacher and felt that she,

> had a lot of creditability with teachers as far as being an expert in curriculum and instruction. And so there was a high level of trust in that area. They know that or they believed that I knew what I was talking about when it came to curriculum and instruction and they trusted me. So when I would make suggestions or plant seeds for different powerful learning type strategies, they believed it. So that was an easy piece for me. And a piece I liked so I got really involved in it.

The interviews revealed that the teachers felt their job responsibilities had changed due to the number of meetings required to implement the accelerated schools process. As one teacher noted, "They [the teachers] never imagined the amount of work and responsibility." The teachers also revealed that they felt Fredrick was "empowering as far as allowing you to take risks on things that go on within your classroom." As the teachers witnessed the principal being "very supportive whenever a plan was completed," a sense of trust was established. This trust was reinforced by the principal's actions toward the central

office. As one teacher noted, "She stood up to central office, you never heard Roberta say you have to do this because central office says you do. She was really great at that."

Fredrick remained at Langford for three years, the longest of any of the principals that succeeded Russell. At the conclusion of Fredrick's third year as principal, personnel changes occurred in the central office. Russell became superintendent, and Fredrick was offered and accepted a central office position similar to the one Russell had held previously. Thus, while her main responsibilities lay with curriculum and instruction, she continued to be involved in districtwide restructuring efforts, including the activities at Langford.

The decision was bittersweet for Fredrick because, as she stated, "The principalship at [the school] was the best job that I've ever had. I just really loved the challenges and the rewards, because we did have a lot of rewards."

As Davidson and St. John (1996) note, the role of the principal in a restructured or accelerated school changes "from a manager or instructional leader to a facilitator--a transformational, empowering leader" (p. 169). During the three years that Roberta Fredrick led the school, teacher leaders emerged and cadres developed effective processes for collegial interactions, improving instruction, and involving parents. In many ways the principal became the "nexus of restructuring efforts--accepting additional autonomy and accountability on behalf of the school and passing it through to the teaching staff (and to the larger community)" (Murphy, 1991, p. 26).

Both Russell and Fredrick were successful in drawing the community together to create the best school for the children at Langford Primary School. According to the interviews, the teachers stated that both were "transformational, empowering leaders."

Nonetheless, while it was widely known at the conclusion of the 1994-1995 school year that Fredrick would not return to Langford in the fall, central office administrators made no effort to obtain input from or consult with the school community concerning the type of leader that would be a fit for the school. The decision of who replaced Fredrick as principal was made by the superintendent, former Langford principal, Russell, along with other district administrators, including Fredrick. The decision turn out to be a poor one for Langford, for the new principal, and for the accelerated schools process.

Gayle Young. Gayle Young assumed the principalship at Langford at the beginning of the 1995-96 school year. The third principal at Langford in four years, she had been employed by the district for 27 years, including 12 years as a teacher and counselor at Langford. Russell, Fredrick, and other central office administrators likely thought Young was the best choice for Langford because of her previous experience at the school and because of her extensive experience as an administrator in the district. She had not only served as an assistant principal at four schools, but was principal for five years at a school that housed grades four through six. As suggested above, their thinking was faulty.

Young accepted the position at Langford expecting to be on familiar ground. She was not prepared for the changes at the school that occurred because of the district reorganization several years earlier and the accelerated schools process. Young soon became aware of the mismatch, and when asked what was the most difficult thing about being appointed to lead a school where a restructuring process was well underway, her comments, as will be seen, coincide with those of the teachers. As she remembered it, the most difficult challenge for her was the "identifying topics that were to be decided solely by administration and topics

that were to go through a channel of people, like the cadres." She exposed the lack of fit between her leadership style and that required of a principal at a successfully functioning accelerated school by stating that, "the teachers have definitely been empowered to the point that a principal's role is more of a team member." The accelerated schools process faltered under Young.

Exacerbating the poor fit between Young's leadership style and the accelerated schools process, was her failure to participate in any training that might have helped her be more successful at Langford. Cadres continued to meet, but decisions were not implemented. Teachers became frustrated that she put little effort into learning the process that had worked so well under Fredrick. Spirits lagged and the school was stymied in its efforts to maintain the progress made under Fredrick. As one teacher noted, "Instead of going ahead that year, we went backwards." Another teacher related that the effect on the accelerated schools process under the leadership of Young

> was disastrous. She stepped into a school that was, we felt, on a roll with accelerated schools. And she stepped in with no knowledge at all of what the process was about or what our roll was as a teacher or what her roll should have been as principal. She seemed to try to grasp what was happening, but she didn't have the training and didn't seem open to some of it from us. It was very haphazard. She believed that we should be allowed to continue with the process, but she had a problem weighing that with her responsibilities with central office. She didn't know how far she could go with us and became very flabbergasted with a lot of it.

With little knowledge of the accelerated schools process and little background as an administrator of a primary grade school, the line between administrative decisions and school-as-a-whole decisions was not clearly defined in her mind, resulting in, as one teacher noted,

> many, many, many, many confusions. I think she got caught up in not exactly knowing when she could make decisions and when it had to go in front of everybody. And that caused a lot of conflict and confusion with everybody.

Her ignorance and unwillingness to learn the process created, as one teacher explained,

> a very hard year. I felt the leadership completely changed. She was so different from the other principals that we had before. It was like changing jobs every year. It was very hard and has taken a toll on our school. It really has.

In the interviews the teachers disclosed that their job responsibilities during Young's tenure changed in a peculiar way. Young's confusion about what decisions were appropriately in the pursue of the cadres, and her ignorance of the decision making process created a situation in which teachers were asked to decide issues without the benefit the Inquiry Process. While some teachers were frustrated that cadre decisions were seldom implemented, others explained that teachers were asked to make more and more decisions. One teacher described the situation noting that, "We could almost take it upon ourselves to do everything." Another teacher responded that, "I felt like Gayle was trying to get us to make more decisions than I think we should have been making; putting the responsibility on us for some things. And then it would always go back, it was our fault." Thus, a no win

situation was created for everybody, largely stemming from the principal's ignorance of the accelerated schools process.

Circumstances worsened toward the end of the 1995-1996 school year, when the district restructuring effort required each school to complete a School Wide Plan utilizing district guidelines. The faculty objected to Langford having to complete the plan because, as they said, "we have been doing this all along." One teacher explained the district process saying, "We had to be a part of this committee, but we didn't have the problem the committee addressed." The plan consisted of establishing committees with teachers assigned to each committee. The task of the committees was outlined in the district guidelines. The Langford faculty assumed that they would be able to continue to addresses challenges at the school by using the Inquiry Process. Despite their protests, Langford teachers were required to comply with the district mandate and a plan for the upcoming year, 1996-1997, was completed.

After a disastrous year, Young was transferred to another school in the district and a fourth principal was assigned to Langford. Summarizing the year with Young, a teacher noted,

> I found last year [under Young] was a real depressing year. I just felt that you never knew what was going on. We didn't have guidance. And I think everybody was depressed and out of sorts because we have had some good principals.

As one of those "good principals," and one who listened to faculty input as a principal, Superintendent Russell might have gained some insight about faculty input in selecting a

principal for a school with a potentially successful school restructuring process underway. Nonetheless, he again relied on administrators to determine the next principal for Langford. Faculty input was not solicited, and again the match was faulty.

Betsy Miller. Betsy Miller had taught in the district for 12 years. In addition, she served as an administrative assistant for four years, but her experience as a principal was limited to serving as interim principal for one year. Her appointment was met with mixed emotions by the Langford faculty. The effect that multiple changes in principals was having on the faculty was evidenced by the words of one teacher who stated,

> With the leadership changing all the time, it has really put a downer on morale. I can tell that this year when Betsy came. I don't know if it was so much that people didn't like her, as it was just *another* new person. We are tired, very tired.

Nonetheless, with the appointment of Miller, a slow turn to the better began at Langford. Miller voiced support for the accelerated schools process and was eager to regain the reputation the school had established under Fredrick. She signaled her willingness to foster the accelerated schools process by attending a 1996 summer training. She did not, however, participate in the Inquiry training that occurred during the school year.

Still, teachers were hopeful that this change in principalship would be a good match. One teacher stated that "I think Betsy has a better idea of what the program [accelerated schools] is actually about. And it is going much better." Another teacher noted, "I think she's good for the school, for the accelerated schools process."

While the faculty expressed some concerns about yet another change in the principalship, Miller had few reservations, herself, about assuming the role of principal in a school implementing a restructuring model. As she said,

> Our whole district has been under a reform process, so that didn't trouble me in any way. But to come to a school that had this particular process in place was a little difficult. *But I'm not sure it is the process as much as the personalities of the people on this faculty* (emphasis added).

Miller related that the "attitude of the teachers" was the hardest thing she had to encounter when arriving at the school. In her words,

> They knew it all, and they also had this attitude that because they were an accelerated school, they were different from every other school in this district. So that was a difficult hurdle. I really found it difficult to get to know the faculty. For them to get to know me and for us to get on the same wave length as far as expectations for this year -- what we hoped to accomplish.

Slowly a sense of trust was built when, as Miller stated,

> I think they started to understand that I saw them as very intelligent, creative, good, strong teachers. They saw that I really loved their children. Apparently, I came on pretty strong. And they didn't know quite how to take that.

Miller was not satisfied with the schoolwide plan completed under Young's tenure, and requested that the teachers re-write the plan before the deadline in early August. Miller also informed the teachers that each committee had a set of guidelines that were to be followed in addressing the challenges. This charge came as a surprise to the faculty, who

expected to use the Inquiry Process to develop solutions to the school's problems. The schoolwide plan was a "priority for the principal," in the view of one teacher. Miller concurred and noted that

> that probably put [the accelerated schools process] pretty much on the side. I think that does bother those who have been here the longest and have worked from the very start with the accelerated schools. They don't feel that they have the time to do the inquiry that they would like to be doing. I think that they see what we do as jumping to solutions which is directly contrary to the accelerated schools process. I believe there is some resentment there. And I'm not quite sure how to resolve that.

Miller was aware that the change in principals at the school had added a great deal of stress to the members of the faculty. In fact, strong community support had changed to alarm that the school did not seem able to keep a principal. In some circles, the multiple changes were attributed to the faculty being difficult to work with. Despite Miller's knowledge that both the series of principal and the decline in community support had taken a toll on the teacher, she made comments that likely did little to alleviate the stress. According to Miller, she told the faculty,

> You all complain frequently about the changes in principals, but how welcome do you make new principals feel? If you want a principal to stay and work with you, you have a responsibility in making them feel comfortable and accepted and want to stay here and work with you.

Nonetheless, school operations ran more smoothly with Miller than with Young, and while the school did not achieve the success that had occurred with Fredrick, the teacher were supportive of Miller's leadership. Miller came to Langford with an explicitly stated commitment to remain at the school for five years, thus bringing stability to the school. However, after one year at Langford, Miller, too, accepted an appointment at another school, and a fifth principal was appointed to lead Langford, again without faculty input.

Discussion

The accelerated schools process "requires a very different style of leadership than traditional schools" (Accelerated Schools, Fall/Winter 1997, p. 13). Under the leadership of Lincoln Russell and Roberta Fredrick, Langford Primary School became a show place for visitors from within the state and from neighboring states. Indeed, requests for visits became so frequent that a calendar had to be established limiting visitations to one group a day. During that time, teachers were involved in decision making, students were actively engaged in classroom activities, and community support for the school was strong.

This was the environment that Young entered when she replaced Fredrick as principal. Although both Young and Miller knew and accepted the fact that the Langford was involved in a restructuring process, obviously neither principal was part of the initial buy-in process. An effective principal in an accelerated school "is determined by the principal's desire to embrace the philosophy, process, and practices of accelerated schools" (Accelerated Schools, Fall/Winter 1997, p. 13). In this district, transferring a principal to another school is considered a vote of confidence. The question then arises as to the commitment of Young and Miller. Were they more committed to proving their worth to the

Superintendent and other district administrators than in "developing constructivist approaches to learning with the whole school community" (Accelerated Schools, Fall/Winter 1997, p. 13). As one teacher noted, "They both wanted to please central office. To make sure they were doing what they wanted."

Both Russell and Fredrick were well liked and respected by the faculty. In the case of Fredrick, all of the teachers interviewed related that she was the leader who contributed to and enabled the school to more toward its vision. As several teachers noted, "Things just kept improving and improving;" "we were on our way with Roberta." Another teacher summed up the feelings when she said, "You could see results. The way we were teaching, the kids were blooming. They were happy. We were happy." And yet the decision to select a principal for Langford without consulting the faculty appears contrary to the very philosophy Russell and Fredrick worked so hard to support.

In reviewing their years with accelerated schools, five teachers credited one of their colleagues with "keeping the vision," despite the changes in principalship. In the interview, this informal teacher leader said that the multiple changes in principalship taught them that "we can't run the school by ourselves; we need an administrative facilitator." She felt that with Miller, they were "heading back in the right direction."

The experiences at Langford suggest that restructuring processes can withstand changes in principalship under certain circumstances. One lesson emerging from the data is that changing principals is not of itself damaging to a restructuring process. Rather, as Ogawa (1995) notes, it is the orientation of the new principal, the fit with the organization and its members, that is salient. A new principal who knows and supports the process can

join a school with little disruption; a new principal who does not know and/or does not support the process creates obstacles that undermine progress made.

A second lesson from the Langford experiences involves nurturing teacher leaders. Under Fredrick, a teacher leader developed who was able to provide stability for the restructuring process during changes in principalship. This suggests that while the role of principal is critical, perhaps as critical for continuity is the development of several teacher leaders who may be more likely to remain at the school.

A final lesson that Langford teaches is the need for fundamental systemic change. Although Taylor et al. (1994) report that such change was underway several years ago in the district, apparently fundamental change in thinking among top central office staff had not occurred. The Superintendent Russell and central office administrator Fredrick might be expected to take into account the opinions of teachers whom they empowered and whose leadership and teaching ability made the school a showcase for the district only a few years earlier. The question arises as to why these two people, who espouse the principles of the accelerated schools process, did not seek input from the very community that the new principals would be serving. When the questions of teacher involvement in selecting a principal for Langford was put to Fredrick, her response was, "That will never happen in this district."

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TABLE 1

Table 1
History of Principals at Langford

Name of Principal	Number of Years Served at School	Years	Attended Training	Attended Inquiry Training	Position Attained After Leaving School
Lincoln Russell	One (for the purpose of this study)	1991-92	Yes	Yes	Central Office position
Roberta Fredrick	Three	1992-95	Yes	Yes	Central Office position
Gayle Young	One	1995-96	No	No	Principal at another elementary school
Betsy Miller	One	1996-97	Yes	No	Principal at another elementary school